

Director's Talk at HRSC-NE Memorial Day Ceremony
May 30, 2003



Thank you for your attendance.

I always find that I struggle a bit in setting the tone for a Memorial Day presentation. It is a holiday unlike any other such as President's Day, or Columbus Day, or the Fourth of July. Those holidays are positive, upbeat, overflowing with good feeling. They *want* to be celebrated.

But there is something more profound about a holiday that wants only to recall those who have died for us on the battlefields of our history.

And so I struggle. What is the proper protocol? What is appropriate?

Is it consistent with the occasion to celebrate, with picnics, or ballgames, or extended weekends down the shore? Or is Memorial Day a day of solemnity – comparable perhaps to the Christian Good Friday? After all, the battlefield losses were not representative of all Americans, they were representative of our very best - young, idealistic, dedicated Americans . . . Heroes all.

Perhaps then on Memorial Day we should pray for, or mourn these heroes? But if so, to what end? Even those of us without religious conviction understand that in their death they were at least separated from what Shakespeare called "...the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to." And those of us who do have a religious sensibility know that in death they have been embraced by God, for God would do nothing less for men and women who sacrificed themselves for the good of others. So for us, prayers or expressions of mourning can only be superficial.

Should we attempt then to praise the memory of these heroes? Should we speak words that eulogize them, or compliment them, or applaud their courage? But how can we? It is not our place to do so. They have honored themselves far more and in far greater ways than it is within our capacity to do. They are superior to us. We have no ability to honor them. We can only hope to learn from them.

The answer finally is clear. We should invite Memorial Day into our hearts and celebrate the hell out of it. We should celebrate because we have been blessed by freedom, a valued and costly gift, paid for by others. We should celebrate Memorial Day as if we had won the lottery and marvel at our own good fortune, because freedom is a joy to behold and celebration is an expression of joy, and because most human beings today and virtually all throughout history have not shared in these riches.

Indeed Memorial Day is the twin sister to all of our other holidays, identical in every respect - save one. Because within its festivities grows a small obligation that we must attend to at the end of each May, each year, year after year. And that is simply to pause, for a minute or two, and remember – that this great gift of freedom has been given to us by strangers and paid for on the most difficult terms possible.

Those strangers are the departed veterans who laid down their lives in the defense of freedom. And if indeed the soul lives on past death, they may still be among us. They may be here, in this room, watching us . . . peacefully.

We need not pray for them. We need not mourn them. We need not praise them. We need only remember, always, what they did for us.

And that, my friends and colleagues, is why we gather here each year, and that is why we are gathered here today.

Please stand with me now and join me in our Pledge of Allegiance.



HRSC-NE Director delivers the 2003 Memorial Day Speech.

MEMORIAL DAY 2003



Employees enjoy pastries and refreshments provided by the HRSC-NE Recreation Association.



Employees take their seats at the Memorial Day Presentation 2003.



HRSC-NE Recreation Association (Debbie Price, Adrienne Crop, Roe Gorgone, Jackie Cunningham, Chris Wilson, and Angie Killens).